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PROSPERITY:
THE ANTIDOTE TO RADICAL ISLAM

by

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| 14. ABSTRACT Many authors, scholars, journalists, and institutions have invested tremendous time and energy in understanding Ansar al Islam (Islamic militancy). They do so to contribute solutions in reducing the violence and creating a more peaceful and stable world. Of late, the popular notion seems to be that the reasons behind Islamic extremism are diverse and complex. Furthermore, the soldiers of these extremist organizations are a diverse group of people with numerous and disparate motivations. The terrorism and violence of these extremists can seemingly be mitigated and possibly eliminated through greater understanding of their grievances and engagement with moderate voices. To the contrary, the common traits obviously apparent in the dominant form of terrorism and conflict faced by the United States today are religion and economics. Religion is often dismissed as one factor among many, however it is the primary catalyst in motivating Muslim men to kill. The dominant role of economics can only be ignored or diminished by overlooking the numerous accounts of the masses of young Muslim men volunteering to become suicide bombers or insurgents. Whereas the deep-seated passions of religion cannot be overcome, even by moderates of the same religion, economics can be improved. Regardless of religion, a sincere interest in the economic well being of countries, communities, and individuals offers the most productive, responsible, and humane course of action. Therefore, the inherent divisiveness of religion should be avoided, while the interdependence of robust economics should be explored. | | | | | |
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Abstract

Many authors, scholars, journalists, and institutions have invested tremendous time and energy in understanding Ansar al Islam (Islamic militancy). They do so to contribute solutions in reducing the violence and creating a more peaceful and stable world. Of late, the popular notion seems to be that the reasons behind Islamic extremism are diverse and complex. Furthermore, the soldiers of these extremist organizations are a diverse group of people with numerous and disparate motivations. The terrorism and violence of these extremists can seemingly be mitigated and possibly eliminated through greater understanding of their grievances and engagement with moderate voices.

To the contrary, the common traits obviously apparent in the dominant form of terrorism and conflict faced by the United States today are religion and economics. Religion is often dismissed as one factor among many, however it is the primary catalyst in motivating Muslim men to kill. The dominant role of economics can only be ignored or diminished by overlooking the numerous accounts of the masses of young Muslim men volunteering to become suicide bombers or insurgents.

Whereas the deep-seated passions of religion cannot be overcome, even by moderates of the same religion, economics can be improved. Regardless of religion, a sincere interest in the economic well being of countries, communities, and individuals offers the most productive, responsible, and humane course of action. Therefore, the inherent divisiveness of religion should be avoided, while the interdependence of robust economics should be explored.

Introduction

The people, as the Scriptures say, have to work in the sweat of their brows in order to maintain their lives of misery... Such a people, we maintain, needs religion... Religion can turn the miserable consciousness of enslavement into a bearable one by raising it to a state of absolute despair, in which there disappears any reaction against evil and with it pain disappears as well: just as opium does serve painful maladies.¹

The opiate of religion is no longer necessary to mask the pain of daily struggle that has existed throughout most of human existence. Although organized religion was an essential ingredient in human evolution, we have attained the capability to adopt a principled viewpoint that transcends the divisiveness of religion and focuses on humanity. The application of this capability resides in spreading simple economic prosperity. Technology, and its exponential advancement, is the mechanism that will allow us to spread basic needs and services across the earth faster and faster.

Unfortunately, one religion seeks to restrain the exponential advancement of mankind. Much like the Roman Catholic Church for over a millennium, today's Muslims mingle politics, science and religion to the detriment of their own culture and the human race. In particular, the extremists of Islam view the proliferation of products, services, and information worldwide via technology as an unacceptable threat to their traditional way of life². Instead of adapting or integrating, they are resisting.

Since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, many Americans have asked the question and struggled to understand, "Why do they (the Islamic extremists) hate us?" Coinciding with this sentiment was the appeal to moderate Muslims for assistance in quelling the extremists. More forceful voices often demanded a "with us or against us" stance from moderate Muslims. To this day, think tanks, militaries, and government organizations explore the possibilities and value of enlisting moderate Muslims to subdue Ansar Al-Islam (Islamic

Militancy). They seek religion versus religion as a solution.

Islamic extremists not only believe that non-Muslims deserve death, but that less devout Muslims who do not believe in a global caliphate are bad Muslims and also deserve death. Religious appeals, even from the same faith, are unlikely to overcome or moderate the indoctrination and deep programming of fanatical Islamists. If the civilized world demands productive results of its efforts, this appeal of employing moderates is not a wise use of time and resources and merits little consideration. A comparison of the current Islamic jihadists with Christian Crusaders and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) will reveal the bankruptcy of religion in resolving disagreements, while highlighting the dominance of economic forces in starting and ending them. Religious leaders will continue to insert themselves and struggle for relevance, but economic ties and dependencies will win the peace and offer solutions. Indeed, for human and humane interests, economics trumps religion.

The Catholic-Protestant conflict in Northern Ireland provides some interesting parallels to the current war on terrorism. Some might argue this was not a religious conflict and that it was based more in nationalism, unionism, socio-economics, or British interference. Therefore, it's not applicable in a religious context. However, the Catholic-Protestant divisions were apparent for over a century and only fueled the violence. Appeals to religious leadership, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, resulted in almost nothing for the better part of a century and had nothing to do with the dramatic drop in violence over the past decade. Two slightly different models of Christianity never found unity in their common thread, yet it is proposed that moderate Muslims can convince militant Muslims that they should just agree to disagree with Jews and Christians. The divisive lines of religion are inescapable for those that hold them. Any strategy to employ religion as a uniter should be abandoned, for it is more likely to divide.

Where does this leave the U.S. with the current insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan? The first step is to ignore religion or at least to minimize differences by staying away from the divisive nature of religion. The next is to employ as many people as possible in as many ways as possible: a robust economic system. This may sound simple, but many are unconvinced that today's terrorists exist because of economic distress in their homeland. Many noteworthy authors argue that these terrorists are educated (college degrees), come from respected families, and have wives and families of their own. The idea that we are fighting against young, uneducated, and unemployed males is dismissed. Therefore, the problem being dealt with is much deeper and meaningful than simple economics. Although these respected authors have a wealth of statistics, one has to be careful to not miss the forest for the trees, and it would seem that they find what they want in their numbers. In fact, the demographics of this group are difficult to pin down and certainly debatable. A challenge can be made that supports the idea that the recruits to these insurgencies are simply acting out of simple human economic needs. Additionally, examples in Northern Ireland and the Christian Crusades offer promising evidence that young men choose to fight because of the low opportunity cost relative to their current status. The lesson to be learned throughout history is that idle manpower is ripe for fighting. Add the incentive of eternal life and many men, particularly those with dire economic futures, will make the easy choice of fighting and dying for a cause.

This essay supports the claim that most Muslim terrorists (conducting suicide attacks and joining insurgencies) are poor, uneducated, single, young men. The definition is derived primarily through analysis of two books where the authors wholly argue the opposite. The definition is important because it leads to the only variable that can be influenced to dramatically reduce Islamic terrorism: economics.

Analysis of Krueger and Pape

There are several authors and academics who take issue with the notion that today's terrorism is a product of poverty. They have scolded President George W. Bush, Undersecretary Armitage, CIA director George Tenet, and others for making statements linking terrorism with poverty.³ For the academics, the problem is much more sophisticated and nuanced requiring detailed analysis. The obvious characteristics of youth, poverty, and lack of education must be a veneer masking a more complex set of grievances within the Muslim world. Only by understanding the politics, emotions, social intricacies and sensitivities of this culture can we properly address the problem of Islamic terrorism. This essay will argue the opposite. Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, the insurgents of Iraq and Afghanistan (both foreign and domestic), Hamas, and Hezbollah are all dependent on the masses of young, poor, and poorly educated men of Middle Eastern countries. The evidence does support the obvious and poverty is directly linked to terrorism, particularly with respect to Muslim extremism.

Two prominent authors, Dr. Robert A. Pape and Dr. Alan B. Krueger, provide an interesting sample of literature and data refuting the claim that terrorism is simple economics. In large part, each of them argues that the nature of the terrorism problem is much more political than most give credit. As Krueger states, "...an accurate understanding of terrorists' motives can help us to put the destructive actions of terrorist attacks behind us, demystify terrorism..."⁴ Additionally, they believe the terrorist population is misrepresented. As opposed to poor, uneducated men, they argue terrorists generally come from middle-class families, have families of their own, a university degree in many cases, and may even be female. It is necessary to point out that they seek to explain terrorism across the globe (secular as well as religious). However, both authors wrote their books post-9/11. They did so in part to retaliate against the simplistic

idea of terrorism being related to poverty and to make a contribution that would be useful in an approach to countering Islamic terrorism. Their theories may apply to smaller groups and terrorists not motivated by religion, but this essay is solely concerned with religiously motivated terrorism. The suicide bombers and terrorists the United States faces today are primarily motivated by an extreme version of the Muslim faith. Utilizing the very data Krueger and Pape put forward along with examples from other religious conflicts, terrorism motivated by religion can be seen to be highly dependent on the economic prospects of young men.

Dr. Krueger's bold claims in the introduction of his book of empirical certainty on this issue are countered throughout the rest of the book by flawed logic, disingenuous sourcing, and strained statistical manipulation. A case in point of his flawed logic is illustrated in his claim that "If poverty and inadequate education were causes of terrorism, even minor ones, the world would be teeming with terrorists eager to destroy our way of life."⁵ For starters, there are plenty of terrorists. As he notes later (contradictingly), "One Hamas leader told her, 'Our biggest problem is the hordes of young men who beat on our doors, clamoring to be sent on suicide missions. It is difficult to select only a few'..."⁶ Similar quotes abound and can be found in news publications, newscasts, and other books. There is no shortage of young men clamoring for the opportunity to meet Allah with all their sins forgiven for destroying infidels. Furthermore, because every poor person is not engaged in terrorism does not imply that the majority of Muslim terrorists are not from impoverished living conditions with little hope for upward economic mobility. Indeed, the pool of personnel is bigger than can be convinced to give their lives and *kill others* because the economic situation is so dire.

Krueger goes on to point out that "*The 9/11 Commission Report* was quite clear on the role of economic deprivation in spurring individuals to participate in terrorism: 'Terrorism is not

caused by poverty’...’’⁷ This is an interesting sentence in the report and somewhat awkward considering the sentence prior speaks of “economic openness” and the next three paragraphs focus solely on economics. The report explains that economic development breeds the conditions ripe for a stronger middle class, rule of law, a fair political system, and states that the United States must assist the “poorest Arab nations.’’⁸ Additionally, just two pages prior, a litany of unpleasant statistics are listed:

- the combined GDP of 22 Arab countries is less than that of Spain
- 40% illiteracy among Arab adults (the majority women)
- *the majority* of older youths desiring to immigrate to another country⁹

The final data point cannot be overstated. The quote concerning poverty cited by Krueger is highly disingenuous. In fact, many parts of the rest of the Commission’s report highlight the irresponsibility of Arab nations in not properly planning for the future of their people for the past thirty plus years. Royalty, oil barons, and corrupt leadership have hoarded the wealth of their nations and failed to invest adequately in infrastructure. Per the report, “...state-centered regimes placed their highest priority on preserving the elite’s grip on national wealth. Unwilling to foster dynamic economies that could create jobs attractive to educated young men, the countries became economically stagnant...’’¹⁰

As far as solid statistics and the empirical truth Krueger states in his introduction, there is little in the data he presents that is not highly subjective. He cites opinion polls from Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, and Pakistan to diminish the claim that less educated and poor people are more likely to join terrorist organizations. By dividing the respondents into education and income levels he clearly illustrates that those in the lower income and education levels are slightly less likely to advocate suicide bombing or terrorism and less likely to get politically

involved.¹¹ Evidently inconsequential to him is the fact that an overwhelming majority in two of those countries thinks suicide bombing is acceptable behavior; almost half in another; and one third in the country most favorable to the U.S. Interestingly, only 10% of Muslim Americans find it acceptable.¹² As a Pew Research study points out, most Muslim Americans are comfortable and happy in America in large part because they are integrated into the society and there is almost no income disparity between Muslim Americans and the general population.¹³ Muslim riots are unheard of in America and thus far almost no Muslim Americans have joined the insurgencies or committed attacks in America. The frequent Muslim riots in France and the sleeper cell attacks in Great Britain suggest a greater tension in Europe. Without the significant income disparities between Muslims and the rest of the European populations,¹⁴ it seems logical that much of this violence would dissipate. More importantly, a stronger economic base in Arab countries would keep more Muslims at home, provide valuable employment, and dry up the supply of manpower for insurgencies and terrorist activity abroad.

The remaining data Krueger presents is accompanied by major qualifications and excuses and littered with phrases such as: “The data, to be sure, have serious limitations.”¹⁵; “The data are noisy and the sample is small, but obtaining high quality data on terrorists is simply not easy.”¹⁶; and differing definitions, no religion data in certain cases, over representation, etc. Assumptions must be made in research, however Krueger’s work is remarkable in that he can manipulate the data in any way he pleases and the conclusion is to be taken definitively. Deductions are made counter to what is intuitive and logical. For example, he lists 27 names with occupations to prove that terrorists are educated and sophisticated people.¹⁷ This says nothing of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, lining up daily to do the extremists’ interpretation of Allah’s work. For all those not selected for the coveted work of a suicide mission, it seems

completely illogical to assume they would simply be turned away. To the contrary, it would be foolish to think that most of these young men did not end up fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan or given some other nefarious mission.

Perhaps, Krueger is correct and most of the terrorists are educated men. This does not diminish the fact that Islamic terrorism is still driven by economic despair in these young men. The 9/11 Commission Report cites a 2004 working paper stating that regional unemployment could hit 25 million by 2010.¹⁸ Furthermore, Terry McDermott, in *Perfect Soldiers* states, “Egypt’s ambitious, virtually free system of higher education pumped out many more graduates than the economy could handle... In one recent year, young Egyptians with graduate degrees were 32 times more likely to be unemployed than illiterate peasants.”¹⁹ Only a small percentage of these numbers would have to be convinced of Allah’s will to have a sizable fighting force.

One thing Krueger does avoid for the most part is the importance of Allah. Indeed, it is difficult to find a single reference to “Allah” in his book. Krueger endlessly seeks the complex political motivations that must be behind each terrorist’s actions. As with the Christians during the Crusades for over seven centuries²⁰, Muslim men kill others in the name of Allah (God) for eternal salvation, paradise, forgiveness of all sins, and the 72 virgins (in the case of Islam). It is not complex – this is exactly what Osama bin Laden guarantees to his recruits for the service and sacrifice of their lives. He gets away with it because life is very difficult for young Arab men in Mideast countries. When there is no opportunity cost, why would they not volunteer for a worthy cause while achieving the ultimate prize in the next life? The decision is simple. Is it not curious that virtually no Muslim Americans engage in this divine calling?²¹

Making it even easier for Osama, is the reality that many of these men were taught since they learned how to speak that non-Muslims are infidels, inhuman, and evil. There are far too

many Hezbollah and Hamas madrasas indoctrinating children into an extreme version of the Islamic faith. As an afterthought in the question and answer section of his book, Krueger admits that “the Palestinians are particularly well educated, but that much of their education tends to be skewed toward religious studies.”²² The U.S. Working Paper cited earlier also “notes a marked shortage of translations of basic books on philosophy, literature, sociology and the natural sciences, and makes note of the ‘sorry state of libraries’ in universities.”²³ This idea of “educated” now begins to fall apart somewhat and it is not what most would consider a strong or balanced education. In Dr. Pape’s book, *Dying to Win*, a similar inconsistency exists with the concept of a “middle class.”

Pape’s book is extremely interesting and thorough. He “compiled a database of every suicide bombing and attack around the globe from 1980 through 2003 – 315 attacks in all.”²⁴ His data includes both religious and secularly motivated attacks and seeks to explain modern suicide terrorism and why the trend is on the rise. Like Krueger, he thinks the problem is complex with complex people and groups acting because of complex political motivations. He is dismissive of simplistic causes, such as fundamentalism or poverty, which attempt to account for these atrocities.

His data is very useful in many ways. For one, again like Krueger, his study illustrates that acquiring demographics and data on terrorists is very difficult, often leaves unanswerable gaps, and leaves plenty of latitude for interpretation. This is an important admission to keep in mind because Krueger and Pape are using in-depth statistical analysis to dismiss commonly observed events – namely, young, male Muslims flying planes into buildings, chopping off heads, blowing up trains, and killing and being killed in the streets of Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite these pitfalls, Pape has one of the best data sets available and a logical analysis of his

data is all that is necessary to prove Islamic terrorism is the product of simple motivations. There is no need to seek volumes of other metrics to counter Pape's conclusions; the counterpoints are actually within his graphs, statistics, and appendix. Although Pape seeks to apply an overall model to modern terrorism, he has contaminated his analysis of the problem of Islamic terrorism and his model is not useful against the dominant form of terrorism the United States faces today.

Pape claims, "Suicide terrorism is not overwhelmingly a religious phenomenon." He determined this through a survey that identified the ideological affiliation of 384 of the 462 suicide terrorists in 315 attacks from 1980 to 2003. He claims 166 (43%) were religious, while 218 (57%) were secular.²⁵ This data is difficult to reconcile with his Appendix where the individual attacks are listed by campaign, date, responsible organization, and number killed. The following statistics derived from Pape's Appendix I²⁶ are noteworthy and significant:

- 167 (53%) attacks were committed by Hamas, Hezbollah, or al-Qaeda
- 20 attacks were committed by Iraqi Rebels against U.S. and Allies
- 14 isolated attacks are listed where 9 of 14 are associated with an Islamic organization

Assuming the 20 Iraqi rebel attacks and 9 isolated attacks were committed by someone of Islamic faith, we reach a religious suicide attack figure of 62% since 1980.

However, Pape delineates between "completed" and "ongoing" campaigns and it is peculiar that he reaches back to 1980 to define modern terrorism. A more useful and applicable sample would be to only consider the ongoing campaigns beginning in 1995. Of the 163 attacks he lists in ongoing campaigns, the number of religious attacks jumps to 85% (including the 20 Iraqi Rebel attacks and six of the Isolated attacks since 1995.) Both ways of looking at the

numbers could be accused of cherry picking data, but the latter applies to the threats the U.S. is facing today. As the 9/11 Commission Report states, “But the enemy is not just ‘terrorism’, some generic evil...It is the threat posed by *Islamist* terrorism...(emphasis in original).”²⁷ And even by Pape’s own data, the trend of terrorism in the name of religion is on the rise. If we measure by the number of victims, the tale is even worse for religion. Approximately 5,300 people were killed by Islamic suicide bombers since 1980, while about 1400 were killed by secular groups according to Pape. *Excluding* the 9/11 attacks, there are more than three times as many religious suicide attack victims as secular since 1995.²⁸

Pape attempts to show the diversity of motives of suicide terrorists by including secular groups in his study. They include the Liberation Tigers of Tamil against Sri Lanka, the Babbar Khalsa International against India, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) versus Turkey, Chechen Separatists against Russia, and the Kashmir Separatists against India. Their motives may range across a spectrum (including, incidentally, religious – how Pape determines none of these attacks were religious is bewildering), however just because other groups have sophisticated motives does not mean Middle Eastern groups do. Very simply, the primary carrot being offered to Islamic youths willing to fight and die for Allah, is instant admission into heaven. Osama makes no secret of it. References to young men are found throughout *The Al-qaeda Training Manual* and as the editor notes, “Here the manual addresses youth in particular...” referring to this passage: “I present this humble effort to these young Moslem men who are pure, believing, and fighting for the cause of Allah.”²⁹ Michael Scheuer adds to this point by stating, “Bin Laden has always made a special appeal to Muslim youths...urging Muslim scholars to ‘teach [young] Muslims that there is no honor except in jihad...” and punctuates the point with “In August 1999, bin Laden added that, ‘young Muslim men...should devote their life to the religion and

should opt for jihad.”³⁰ When bin Laden mentions “jihad,” there should be no doubt that he means *violent* jihad.³¹

Sex and age are also demographic characteristics used by Pape to try to defeat what seems intuitively obvious. Although he admits Islamic fundamentalism is the least likely to employ females and that al-Qaeda has not utilized a single female suicide attacker, he finds it necessary and significant to focus on six female attackers in Lebanon from 1982 -1986. Even within this group, the females represented only 16% of the suicide attackers. Furthermore, he again mixes today’s terrorist problem with examples from the Tamil Tigers, Chechens, and the PKK - 20%, 60%, and 71% female suicide attackers, respectively.³² The point must be reiterated that today’s terrorism threat is an Islamic threat. Indeed, Pape’s data supports the notion that the rising trend of suicide terrorism, particularly since 1995, is dominated by Islamic terrorism, which is overwhelmingly committed by males. To take it a step further, young males.

In order to achieve a significant number of terrorists that fall in the older age category, Pape conveniently defines the top age group as 24 or older. He also accuses “most people” of thinking “that suicide terrorists are overwhelmingly *teenage* boys...(emphasis added)”³³ The term “young men” is certainly not restricted to teenage years and it seems more logical that most peoples’ definitions might easily extend through a man’s twenties. Regardless, Pape found 68% under the age of 24 and 32% were 24 or older.³⁴ It must be kept in mind that Pape is possibly sampling the most mature, the most intelligent, the elite of terrorist volunteers. For example, the 19 hijackers for the 9/11 attack were selected specifically by Osama bin Laden.³⁵ Yet even among this elite sample, the individuals are predominantly *young* men. Perhaps almost all (probably 99%) would be considered young if 30 years of age were the cutoff. Furthermore, for those not selected for such clandestine missions as suicide attacks, should it be assumed in

general that they are more or less mature than these elites of the terrorist world?

Pape estimates that between 5,000 to 8,000 individuals reported to al-Qaeda training camps between 1996 and 2001³⁶ – figures consistent with many other sources. He also calculated the average age of 278 suicide bombers to be 22.7 years and 26.7 years for al-Qaeda members. Conceding his calculations, the strong argument remains that the thousands of recruits and volunteers to Islamic terror organizations are *young*, male, Muslims who could not find descent work in their homeland and were lured by a warped religious promise of salvation. By the ripe old age of 28, Mohamed Atta was a “committed fundamentalist”³⁷ and five years later he led the 9/11 mission to destroy the twin towers. Although many authors choose Atta as an example of the complex individual who was forced to resort to terrorism, his case is consistent with the stereotype expressed above and denied by Pape and others.

The Peculiar Case of Mohamed Atta

Mohamed Mohamed el-Amir Awad el-Sayed Atta is a popular choice for authors seeking an example of an educated, middle-class, “normal” individual who turned to fundamentalism out of a perceived cultural struggle for survival.³⁸ Pape examines Atta as one of three terrorists he believes supports his conclusions. Most of Pape’s characterization of Atta’s life is rosier than the harsh reality of it, and this will be explored in more detail in the following paragraphs. However, there is only one fact needed to dispel the notion that Islamic terrorism is not heavily linked to economics and this fact is found in Pape’s work. Atta could not get a job in Cairo. As Pape states, “Like a great many college graduates, he had not been able to find a job in his field in the weak Egyptian economy.”³⁹ This was true for Atta in 1992 and he experienced the same rejection upon returning from Germany in 1995. It was indicative of thousands in the engineering field alone in a single city in one Mideast country.⁴⁰ Similar challenges existed and

continue to exist across many Arab nations.

Killing other humans remains a difficult act for most humans on this planet. The idea that terrorism has no corollary to poverty because every jobless Arab is not slaughtering non-believers is ridiculous. Because there are so many jobless Arab men, there is ample opportunity to convince these idle bodies to commit their lives to a “worthy” cause. The Muslim faith holds a unique power over masses at this point in time, one that has not been seen since the Christian Crusades during the Middle Ages. And like the Crusades, the leaders of the faith are convincing idle masses with deeply held religious beliefs that killing in the name of God is not only acceptable, but will be rewarded. Mohammed Atta was susceptible to this persuasion because of his faith and his inability to find a job in his homeland.

According to Pape, Atta grew up in a middle class family in the “genteel Abdein neighborhood of Cairo.”⁴¹ His father was a lawyer, encouraged moderation in religion, and expected his children to succeed in school and their secular careers. Atta “was accepted at work and school”⁴² in Germany. In general, Pape paints Atta as a normal, well-adjusted Muslim abroad who interacted well with his peers, roommates, and professors. He emphasizes there were no significant negative qualities in Atta that would indicate he was prone to the monstrous act he would organize and commit on 9/11/2001. Atta “in no way matches the stereotype”⁴³ of someone desiring death as an escape and the only thing surprising to Pape is the sudden transition late in Atta’s life to a soldier in the Muslim cause.

By the time Atta went to Germany, he was a militant Muslim. Although Pape believes Atta’s haj to Mecca in 1995 may have been a significant turning point, it seems more likely this was simply one of many events in Atta’s life that lead to his extremism. Pape’s short biography of Atta is not inaccurate, however it is incomplete. To truly understand why Atta found comfort

in al-Qaeda, a more honest assessment of his past is necessary.

The first chapter of Terry McDermott's *Perfect Soldiers* should convince any Westerner that the middle class of Egypt is not the same as the middle class of America or Europe. The descriptions of polluted streets and irrigation ditches, dusty cities, and lack of privacy are indicative of the conditions in many other Arab cities. McDermott speaks of people living "on top of one another" and how "Cairo remains today a collection of villages." He continues with, "The overwhelming majority of Cairenes spend their lives in that unknowing condition, tethered to their poverty, their past, and their God..."⁴⁴ Atta's father was a lawyer who provided amply for his family, but the conditions and surroundings that Atta grew up in were by Western standards impoverished.

Atta's father was everything Pape attributed to him, but also extremely strict and apparently not sociable. Descriptions from neighbors of Atta's family and father include: "They lived a closed family life. They were very polite but had little contact with any others." and "He [Atta's father] was unapologetic about his lack of sociability."⁴⁵ Although the father was proud of the success of his children, this isolation in "one of the densest districts in one of the most densely populated cities on Earth" would have a profound impact on Atta. He would grow to be a difficult man with few social skills.

In 1992, Atta went to Hamburg, Germany to continue his education. Examples of his immaturity, intolerance to Western culture (particularly displays of female sexuality), and introversion dominate descriptions of his behavior in McDermott's book. Despite considerable effort to be warm and welcoming to Atta, his landlady came "to feel uncomfortable in her own home" and Atta would leave the dwelling in less than a year.⁴⁶ The trend continued with follow on roommates dreading his presence. With the exception of his professors, Atta made few

friends and avoided every social invitation (save one that he hated) ever extended to him.⁴⁷ Atta was not the normal, psychologically balanced individual Pape would have us believe. Atta was maladjusted and increasingly found comfort in the religion he was born into. His haj to Mecca was significant and marked a noticeable change in his behavior. However, the foundation for his oncoming militancy had been built over a lifetime by uncompromising religious beliefs and disappointing economic prospects in Egypt.

It is interesting to wonder how events would have unfolded if Atta had gained admission to Cairo University's elite graduate school or been able to obtain an engineering job in Cairo. Although there may still have been an air attack on the World Trade Center, it seems highly unlikely Mohammed Atta would have had anything to do with the attack, much less lead it.

The 13 Muscle Hijackers of 9/11

Every organization must have a hierarchy and leadership. To deny that al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah are run by educated men with often affluent backgrounds would be foolish. They exist in each organization. The Popes of the Crusades enlisted the leadership and resources of knights, lords, dukes, bishops and other knowledgeable men who acted in their own self interests to acquire more land, treasure, or power over men (in addition to absolution of sins.) However, the bulk of the fighting force was the scattered, uneducated peasants of Europe. Very similarly, Islamic terror groups have experienced, educated, wealthy men running their organizations. The sincerity of their motives is impossible to determine and inconsequential regardless. They are the extreme minority of their organizations, but these are the men academics like to focus on and provide as examples. The thousands of poor, uneducated, young, single men who sustain the organization remain nameless and out of the discussion. The 13 muscle hijackers of 9/11 rate little attention relative to Mohamed Atta and the Hamburg cell. An analysis of this small sample

of elite terrorists is helpful in understanding the make-up of Islamic terror groups.

Important to keep in mind is the fact that Osama, in consultation with Atta and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, personally picked the 9/11 hijackers.⁴⁸ The average terrorist training in the camps of Afghanistan and then sent out to fight coalition forces did not require such scrutiny. Of this elite group, Mohamed Atta was the exception in terms of education. As the 9/11 Commission Report states, “[Atta] applied himself fairly seriously to his studies (at least in comparison to his jihadist friends)...”⁴⁹ The report goes on in the descriptions of the other three Hamburg cell members to note deficiencies in all their studies, including: continual academic problems, failing and cutting classes, expulsions, and requirements to repeat courses of study.⁵⁰ Although not high school dropouts, these young men were misguided at best. Their education level is nothing exceptional compared to other poor young men and the evidence indicates each of them struggling to some degree in a foreign system. The familiar territory of religion appears to have been a comforting haven each of them could withdraw to. That is not the mark of a mature, independent mind. Rather these affiliations resemble the antics of immature fraternity members or the dangerous rites of passage of a gang.

The men flying the planes and planning the operation might not fit cleanly into the theory that most Islamic terrorists are poor, uneducated, single men. However, the 13 muscle hijackers fit perfectly into that stereotype. Per the 9/11 Commission report, “All [the 13 muscle hijackers] were between 20 and 28 years old; most were unemployed with no more than a high school education and were unmarried.”⁵¹ Four were from an “isolated and underdeveloped area of Saudi Arabia”; five were from “a poor region in southwestern Saudi Arabia”; another from a small town; some had had fallouts with their families; and some were drop outs, were mixed up in petty theft, or had problems with alcohol.⁵² Well over half the 9/11 hijackers were poor,

uneducated, single Muslim men and the remainder arguably meet the majority of that description. These men carried out the most clandestine and massive operation al-Qaeda has ever conducted. It seems illogical to assume the remaining population of volunteers and recruits are more affluent, smarter, and older. Yet Pape and Krueger are shocked that the stereotype persists.

The word “stereotype” can itself be interpreted to be somewhat offensive. When authors use this word to describe the opposing view, they are generally implying that view is baseless. This essay has not shied away from using the word. It is meant to be useful, not derogatory or condemning. If the stereotype is accurate, then it is not only useful but necessary, so the problem can be recognized and addressed.

Northern Ireland

Krueger admits the “Puzzle of Northern Ireland” does not fit into his theory and is perplexed as to “why Northern Ireland appears to be so different.”⁵³ The similarities between the Catholic-Protestant conflict and Islamic terrorism are striking and Krueger is asking the wrong question: not why are they different, rather why are they alike. Furthermore, what can we learn from Northern Ireland to help us resolve conflict in the Mideast and reduce or eliminate Islamic terrorism?

The data on Northern Ireland fully supports the theory that the foot soldiers of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) were mostly poor, uneducated, young, men. In *Terrorism in Ireland*, a collection of essays, the theme is consistent across more than a dozen authors. Krueger recognizes it himself noting “that Irish groups, such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), are poorly educated” and were “disproportionately working class.”⁵⁴ Additionally, the conflict was always divided along Catholic-Protestant lines.

Here we have a definitive sample to study and learn from, yet Krueger dismisses this case as simply an anomaly. Northern Ireland provides a microcosm for analysis with many parallels to the current world struggle. Economic disparity between parties, corrupting religious influences, and minority factions abroad acting peacefully are all elements of the Irish conflict on a small scale and the Muslim conflict on a large scale.

The most remarkable similarity between the Irish and Muslim conflicts is the behavior of each of their minority populations in America. In one essay, an author reveals that after 1920, "...many Irish-Americans began to lose their dependence on Irish nationalism as they acquired a higher social and *economic status* (emphasis added.)"⁵⁵ He goes on to list social class distribution statistics that are amazingly similar to the Pew Research Council's statistics on Muslim-Americans.⁵⁶ Even in the late 1960's when the violence escalated again in Ulster, Irish-Americans (with the exception of some financial support) were too comfortable to aid their brethren, who were killing and dying across the Atlantic for a cause common to all Irish Catholics. The extremism of religion is not tolerated by and cannot be sustained in healthy economic environments.

The Catholic Church has come a long way since its utterly inhumane guidance to its loyal flock in the days of the Crusades. However, it was less than helpful throughout the Irish conflict. Along with the Churches of Scotland and England, the Catholic Church was more often concerned about politics and appearances rather than outright condemnation of violence or a viable solution. At best, the churches issued qualified statements abhorring the violence, always careful not to alienate their followers. More prevalent were such divisive publications as the Church of Scotland's "report entitled The Menace of the Irish Race to Our Scottish Nationality."⁵⁷ A Catholic bishop, sounding like today's imams, "admit[ted] that 'Roman

Catholic schools divide society’ but he would not apparently have it any other way since there is much in contemporary society from which he and his colleagues would like to shield young and impressionable Catholics.”⁵⁸

Irish Catholics for most of the 20th Century fought the upper class Protestants with terror tactics. The Protestants, often seeing themselves as more British than Irish and with the aid of the British, struggled to maintain their economic superiority. Believing in a zero sum game, the Protestants assumed prosperity for the Irish would equal a reversal of status and the demise of their own well-being. At the heart of the violence was economic disparity between these two classes, but it was fueled by British interference and religious pride.

In the end, the politicians, government intervention, and particularly religious leaders had basically no positive effect on the conflict and violence for almost the entire 20th century. Ireland has experienced an economic boom over the past decade. The negotiations, governments, politicians, leaders, and religious sentiments remain unchanged, yet violence has drastically diminished. The major difference of low unemployment and robust economic growth has quelled the violence in Ireland.

Conclusion

Pape believes it is necessary to delve deeper into this problem of terrorism to dispel “the still dominant perception that suicide terrorists are essentially society’s losers.”⁵⁹ There are two problems with this statement. First, there is no necessity nor is it worth the time to contemplate barbaric behavior. The civilized world has no burden to slow down the evolution of the human race to deal with the grievances of the minority of a religion struggling against modernization. Furthermore, there is nothing to gain by going down this road. As the 9/11 Report states, “The small percentage of Muslims who are fully committed to Usama Bin Ladin’s version of Islam are

impervious to persuasion.”⁶⁰

The other problem is that Pape is attempting to discredit essays such as this one by saying Muslim men are being labeled as “losers.” This essay is not an attack on religion, the individuals, or the Muslim culture. Indeed, it is incredibly unfortunate and quite sad that these young Muslim men fall prey to the Osamas, Zarqawis, and Sadrs of the Arab world. Nevertheless, avoiding an accurate description of the results of an analysis because it might stereotype or stigmatize a group fails to identify the problem. Thus, we cannot address and attempt to fix the problem.

On the final page of his book, *The Crusades*, Jonathan Riley-Smith cites several authors who recognized the utter bankruptcy of 700 years of Christian Crusades. He quotes David Hume with, “...the most signal and most durable monument of human folly that has yet appeared...”⁶¹ Others masterfully illustrate the devastating waste of not only human lives, but of industry, art, ingenuity, wealth, and agriculture. The Roman Catholic Church, conspiring with kings, queens and other nobility, strangled the productive capacity of the populace and generated misery across Europe and into the East for seven centuries. Indeed, the only appropriate reaction to this history is “contempt and sorrow.”⁶²

Unfortunately, the extremist leaders of Islam seek similar circumstances. The global caliphate Osama bin Laden seeks would impose Sharia law⁶³ from Afghanistan to Spain. His idea of Muslim civilization would relegate his people to a third world existence for eternity. The brilliance and creativity of billions of people would be stifled in the pious discomfort of strict religious discipline. Women would be second class citizens with such barbaric practices as death by stoning and mutilation of genitalia as acceptable. Worse, there would be no need for women to vote or read. He would stop time for his people and possibly march it backwards.

The civilized world has no responsibility to comprehend such barbarism, be receptive to this viewpoint, or even try to engage it with the moderate voices of mainstream (peaceful) Islam. Actually, the responsible action is to not waste one second of time or one atom of energy in entertaining these extreme viewpoints. The obligation for peaceful interaction lies as much with the nations in the Mideast as it does with any Western nation. Without major reform that addresses the economic needs of the masses and taps into the engine of talent within those masses, Arab countries will continue to languish behind the advancement of Western nations. Additionally, they will continue to produce men that desire to trade the misery of this life for the paradise of the next. It matters not that Osama's twisted interpretations of the Koran and Surahs are as senseless as the machinations of Pope Urban's Mathildine scholars.⁶⁴ Aside from humane concerns, if Western nations do not desire to fight Islamic insurgents and terrorists, it is in their best interests to assist Arab nations economically.

Ray Kurzweil, in *The Singularity is Near*, makes an interesting comparison between the fundamentalism of Greenpeace against genetically modified organisms and the religious extremism of Islam. Greenpeace's opposition to a genetically modified strain of rice (Golden Rice) rich in beta-carotene resulted in millions of additional blind children in Africa because of a rigid, unreasoned stance. Similarly, the fanatics of Islam will subdue the power and creativity of one fourth of the population of the earth for as long as they can. However, the onslaught of technology is unstoppable. As Kurzweil states, "Ultimately the demonstrated ability of technologies such as GMO to solve overwhelming problems will prevail, but the temporary delays caused by irrational opposition will nonetheless result in unnecessary suffering."⁶⁵

The irrational opposition of Islam is causing lots of young Arab men to get killed and far too many Americans to go in harm's way on an all too regular basis. The United States has an

endless stream of bullets for an endless stream of volunteer terrorists, but this is a sad and undesirable course of action. The prospect of reforming extreme Muslims through the voices of moderate Muslims is simply a hopeful, well-intentioned idea based in reasoning with those that are beyond reason. For the most part and particularly on a mass scale, a person's faith is unalterable. The one factor that can be affected and needs to be affected is the economy. However, the U.S and the West can only help those countries that want to help themselves.

Notes

¹ Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 21 (quoting Moses Hess.)

² Although some might point out that Islamic radicals are eager to use cell phones and the internet to spread their message, the overall suppression of creativity within their own society is undeniable. To the leaders of this faith, the wealth and input of 50 percent of its population are not even worth considering. Among the more than one *billion* Muslim women currently alive, we will never know the brilliance of the artists, scientists, geniuses, and natural born leaders that statistically must exist within them. Although the loss of this talent to humanity is unfortunate, the religiously sanctioned inhumane treatment of Muslim women is disturbing. Additionally, inquisitive youths playing rock-n-roll like music or surfing the internet are often arrested in Iran; professors of universities that get out of line disappear. If anything, the selective use of technology while attempting to suppress its proliferation reveals a certain hypocrisy.

³ Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 2, 12.

Michael Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2007), 62.

⁴ Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist*, 5.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸ The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 378.

⁹ Ibid., 376.

¹⁰ Ibid., 53.

¹¹ Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist*, 25.

¹² Pew Research Center, *Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream* (May 22, 2007): 5, <http://pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf>.

¹³ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist*, 35.

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¹⁶ Ibid., 36.

¹⁷ Ibid., 40-43.

¹⁸ Al-Hayat, "U.S. Working Paper for G-8 Sherpas," (2004/02/13), 1, http://www.ciei.usj.edu.lb/observations/dictators/gme_initiative_usa_en.pdf.

¹⁹ Terry McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 2005), 31.

²⁰ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 1, 296. Pope Urban delivered a speech in 1095 that set off the First Crusade in 1096. "The crusading movement ended with the fall of Malta on 13 June 1798..."

²¹ Of course, John Walker Lindh is the most notorious exception to this statement. The fact remains that he and others like him are extremely rare in the United States.

²² Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist*, 144-145.

²³ Al-Hayat, "U.S. Working Paper for G-8 Sherpas," 4.

²⁴ Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win* (New York: Random House, 2005), 3.

²⁵ Ibid., 210.

²⁶ Ibid., 253-264.

²⁷ The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 362.

²⁸ Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 253-264.

²⁹ Jerrold M. Post, ed., *The Al-Qaeda Training Manual* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: USAF Counterproliferation Center), 18-19.

³⁰ Michael Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, 62.

³¹ "Jihad" translates to "struggle." The greater jihad of the Islamic faith refers to an internal struggle of the soul to resist lust and strengthen faith. The lesser jihad refers to battle and the Koran governs the conduct of how war can be waged for Muslims. Osama bin Laden has interpreted the teachings of Islam to serve his needs, conveniently discarding restrictions of killing civilians (including women, children, and fellow Muslims).

³² Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 204-209.

³³ Ibid., 207.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 235.

³⁶ Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 223.

³⁷ Ibid., 225.

³⁸ Ibid., 226.

³⁹ Ibid., 225.

⁴⁰ Terry McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, 31.

⁴¹ Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 224.

⁴² Ibid., 225.

⁴³ Ibid., 220.

⁴⁴ Terry McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, 10-11.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 32-33.

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⁴⁸ The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 235.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 160.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 161-163.

⁵¹ Ibid., 231.

⁵² Ibid., 231-233.

⁵³ Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist*, 44-45.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁵ Yonah Alexander and Alan O'day, eds., *Terrorism in Ireland* (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1984), 36.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 200.

⁶⁰ The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 375.

⁶¹ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 298.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ For definitional purposes, two descriptions of Sharia law are provided below:

“The Sharia provided Muslims with a divinely approved blueprint for human conduct that was inherently and essentially religious. It dealt with every aspect of conscience, from interpersonal relations to an individual's relationship with God... including governance... under the Sharia, the Islamic polity could not bestow full equity to those who held other beliefs and practiced other forms of worship.” Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, 275.

“Under the sharia law of Bashir, a woman today cannot leave the country without the written permission of her father or husband. Men and women must sit in separate areas of public buses. The army has been purged of unbelievers. The government-attorney staffs and the courts have been cleansed of those who are not sufficiently loyal to the agenda of Bashir and his right-wing religious brotherhood. Elections have been corrupted. Men and women have been mercilessly brutalized for the most insignificant or unproved deeds. People disappear.” Daoud Hari, *The Translator: A Tribesman's Memoir of Darfur* (New York: Random House, 2008), 187.

⁶⁴ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 8.

⁶⁵ Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near* (New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2005), 414-415.

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